

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

4. (Amended) A recombinant DNA comprising the gene of claim 1.

A2
5. (Amended) An expression vector for a microorganism, an animal cell or a plant cell, comprising the gene of claim 1 or the recombinant DNA of claim 4.

A3
9. (Amended) A polypeptide possessing a ceramidase activity, encoded by the gene of claim 1.

11. (Amended) An antisense DNA which is complementary to the gene of claim 1 or a part thereof.

A4
12. (Amended) An Antisense RNA which is complementary to the gene of claim 1 or a part thereof.

A5
14. (Amended) An oligonucleotide probe or primer, capable of specifically hybridizing to the gene of claim 1, or a complementary stand thereof.

Q5
cont. 15. (Amended) An antibody or a fragment thereof, capable of specifically binding to the polypeptide of claim 8.

Q6 20. (Amended) A method of controlling an amount of ceramide in a cell and/or in a tissue, characterized by introducing the gene of claim 1 or an antisense nucleic acid thereof into the cell and/or the tissue, thereby controlling the amount of ceramide in the cell and/or in the tissue.

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